

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03

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P R 180425Z DEC 75

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3139

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMCONSUL BRISBANE BY POUCH

AMCONSUL PERTH BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MELBOURNE 2095

E O 11652 GDS

TAGS ELAB, AS, PINT

SUBJ: HAWKE ON LABOR PROSPECTS AFTER ELECTION

REF: MELBOURNE 2051

1. LABATT HAD LONG TALK WITH HAWKE AT MELBOURNE TRADE UNION COUNCIL OFFICE ON DEC 17. LABOR LEADER HAD SPENT DEC 16 IN CANBERRA MEETING PRIME MINISTER FRASER, MINISTER FOR LABOR STREET, FORMER PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM. AT NIGHT HAWKE SPENT SEVERAL HOURS EACH WITH PUBLISHERS MURDOCH AND PACKER. HAWKE NOTED THAT PUBLISHERS HAD ASKED FOR MEETINGS AND HE HAS BEEN ASKED ALSO TO MEET PUBLISHER FAIRFAX, COMPLETING TRIO WHO CONTROL AUSTRALIAN PRESS AND MUCH COMMERCIAL TV AND RADIO.

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2. HAWKE SAID FRASER MEETING WAS AS CORDIAL AS MEDIA

HAVE REPORTED. HOWEVER, HE FOUND FRASER STILL VERY
EVASIVE ON WHEN HE INTENDS TO START DELIVERING CAMPAIGN
PROMISES, SUCH AS INSTITUTION OF TAX INDEXATION.
LATER, FRASER AND STREET CONVINCED HAWKE THEY WOULD NOT
TAMPER WITH PRICES JUSTIFICATION TRIBUNAL WITHOUT
SERIOUS THOUGHT AND WIDE CONSULTATION. HAWKE OBVIOUSLY
LIKES STREET, BUT STILL HAS NOT WARMED TO FRASER.

3. HAWKE SPENT SUNDAY WITH WHITLAM, AND FOUND HIM VERY
QUIET. ALMOST AT ONCE EX-PRIME MINISTER ASKED HAWKE IF
HE WAS "READY TO MOVE OVER." HAWKE SAID "YES"; AND
WHITLAM PRODUCED STATEMENT ALREADY PREPARED, ANNOUNCING,
IN EFFECT THAT THEY BOTH AGREED TO HAWKE SUCCESSION TO
LEADERSHIP. HAWKE TOLD LABATT HE IS BIT CONCERNED OVER
WISDOM OF ANNOUNCEMENT, BUT ON BALANCE FELT IT HAD "SMOKED
OUT" LATENT FEELINGS AGAINST WHITLAM.

4. THEREAFTER TWO DID WHIP-AROUND OF FEDERAL AND STATE
LEADERS AND ASSURED THEMSELVES THEY "HAVE NUMBERS" TO GET
HAWKE INTO SAFE SEAT AND INTO LEADERSHIP. EXACT TIMING IS
UNCERTAIN, BUT HAWKE "CAN GO" AS SOON AS HE HAS ACTU
SUCCESSION SECURE. WHITLAM WILL STEP ASIDE ANYTIME THEREAFTER,
BUT DEFINITELY THIS YEAR. HAWKE NOT DISTURBED BY
NEED TO VACATE SAFE VICTORIAN SEAT, AND SAID DR JENKINS,
JUST RE-ELECTED BY ALP AS MP FOR SCULLIN, VICTORIA, CAN
BE EASILY PERSUADED. IN SUBSEQUENT TALK DEC 18 WITH LABATT AND
CONGEN, HAWKE ALSO MENTIONED GARRICK OF BATMAN, VIC.

5. HAWKE SAYS THERE WILL BE NO REAL OPPOSITION TO
WHITLAM AT CAUCUS MEETING NEXT WEEK. BOTH VICTORIA
AND NEW SOUTH WALES ARE SOLID, AND ARE PUSHING CREAN
AND BOWEN, BOTH DECLARED CANDIDATES, TO WITHDRAW.
CAMERON AND CAIRNS, IN FACE OF STATE ORGANIZATION SUPPORT
FOR WHITLAM, HAVE COME "IRRELEVANT."

6.. HAWKE NOTES WITH SATISFACTION THAT RIGHT WINGER JOHN
DUCKER OF NEW SOUTH WALES, AND BILL HARTLEY, LEFT LEADER
OF VICTORIA, HAVE ENDORSED NOT ONLY RE-ELECTION OF WHITLAM, BUT
ELECTION OF HIMSELF AS NEXT LEADER. HE CONJECTURED THAT HARTLEY
WANTED
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HIM OUT OF ACTU IN HOPE OF STRENGTHENING LEFT WING IN
THAT BODY.

7. HAWKE'S OWN CHOICE FOR UNION PRESIDENCY IS
CHARLIE FITZBIGGON, TOUGH LEFT OF CENTER LEADER OF
MILITANT WATERSIDE WORKERS. HAWKE THOUGHT HARTLEY
"AND HIS UNION STOOGES" WOULD "BREAK THEIR TEETH" ON
CHARLIE. (LABATT AGREES AS FITZGIBBON IS

VERY MUCH IN THE HAWKE MOLD AND HAS BEEN GROOMED FOR PAST THREE YEARS.) HAWKE FEELS JOHN DUCKER, ONLY OTHER POSSIBLE CANDIDATE, HAS TOO MUCH TO LOSE BY MOVING FROM SYDNEY TO MELBOURNE. (DUCKER IS MEMBER NEW SOUTH WALES UPPER HOUSE, SECRETARY OF TRADES HALL COUNCIL, PRESIDENT STATE ALP AND HAS OTHER SYDNEY BASED JOBS.) ACTU HAS POWER TO APPOINT FITZGIBBON AS ACTING PRESIDENT, AND AGAIN TIMING HAS TO BE WORKED OUT.

8. LABATT ASKED ABOUT WHITLAM FUTURE AFTER RELINQUISHING LEADERSHIP. HAWKE SAID WHITLAM, IN "UN-GOUGHLIKE" GESTURE, TOLD HAWKE HE WOULD LIKE TO STAY ON, WORKING IN OPPOSITION AS SHDOW ATTORYNEY GENERAL. HAWKE SAID HE WAS TOUCHED AND READILY AGREED.

9. HAWKE CLAIMS PARTY IN GREAT SHAPE WITH MORALE HIGHER THAN HE EXPECTED. HE NOTED THAT ALP HAS SO FAR GOT 43 O/O OF DEC 13 VOTE. THEY ARE IN BETTER POSITION THAT AFTER HOLT VICTORY IN 1966. HE CLAIMS IF THEY DO ADDITIONALLY AS WELL IN 1978 AS THEY DID IN 1969, THEY WILL WIN BY GOOD MARGIN. (LABATT COMMENTS THIS IS MODEST ENOUGH TARGET, BUT POINTS OUT ONLY LOWER HOUSE COULD BE WON BY LABOR. SENATE QUITE ANOTHER THING.)

10. HAWKE SAYS HE INTENDS TO "WORK LIKE HELL" AND NOT NECESSARILY ALWAYS AGAINST FRASER. HE THINKS COUNTRY IS IN LOUSY SHAPE AND FRASER ECONOMIC POLICIES "AS FAR AS ANYBODY REALLY KNOWS WHAT THEY ARE" ARE INCOMPLETE AND INCONSISTENT. HE DEPLORES "QUALITY" OF ALP PARLIAMENTARY PARTY, BUT SMALL NUMBER DOESN'T DISCOURAGE HIM.

11. COMMENT: LABATT FEELS WHITLAM-HAWKE LEADERSHIP BIGGEST TASK IS PRESERVING PARTY UNITY, STILL FAIRLY WELL
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WELDED BY CAMPAIGN HEAT. AT SAME TIME FRASER HAS NO EASY TASK AS HEAD OF COALITION. WHILE LIBERALS HAVE SUFFICIENT SEATS TO GOVERN IN OWN RIGHT, DIVERGENT VIEWS OF ECONOMY BETWEEN LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTIES, AND BETWEEN FACTIONS IN LIBERAL PARTY ITSELF, PRESENT TIME-CONSUMING PROBLEMS FOR NEW PRIME MINISTER.
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